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ABSTRACT

The professional preparation of educators is intensely and intrinsically political; this constitutes the external environment of the dean or chief administrator. What is true in the external environment of professional education is also true in the internal environment of the chief administrator of such programs. The different roles and functions of the administrator create competing pressures and demands that force the administrator to divide his or her time, talents, and energy. This is an intrinsically political process. Orderly politics is impossible without recognized structures and ground rules. This is equally true of the external and internal environments of the chief administrator. The term "constitution" refers to the basic purposes that guide a political entity and the fundamental structures in which those purposes will be sought. In this sense, any major social enterprise can be said to have a constitution, but so can any individual. Unless the administrator has a sense of consciousness about purpose and structure (i.e., a "constitution"), which is parallel to that which organizations require, the administrator will sooner or later encounter serious difficulties. (Author/JG)

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POLITICS AND PERSONHOOD AND WHY DEANS NEED STRONG CONSTITUTIONS FOR BOTH

by

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I will state my central proposition briefly at the outset and then devote the bulk of my time to illustration and elaboration.

1. The professional preparation of educators is intensely and intrinsically political. This can be termed the external environment of the dean or chief administrator.

2. What is true in the broad field of professional education externally is directly paralleled in the internal environment of chief administrators responsible for such programs. The interactions between the different roles and functions each of us is called upon to perform is a "who gets what, when, where, and how" question, and what is being divided up is the administrator's time, talents, and energies.

3. Orderly politics is impossible without commonly agreed upon fundamental structures and ground rules. This is equally true whether we are thinking about the external environment or the internal environment of the administrator. Hence the concept of "constitutions."

I will explore first the political nature of the preparation of educational professionals, or, as I have termed it, the external environment. A useful way of looking at this is in terms of key actors and stakeholders. They are numerous. Each actor has specified roles that it can be expected--or is sanctioned--to perform and each stakeholder group can be expected to try and represent its interests in some manner. For example, the faculty in teacher education can be expected to

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assert their traditional responsibility for the definition of curriculum, the development of criteria for admission, and the establishment of standards for graduation.

The chief administrator of a department, college, or school of education will expect to have prime even if not exclusive responsibility for budget and personnel and major input into policy development. Also lodged with the chief administrator in all likelihood will be responsibilities delegated by the appropriate state agency respecting certification requirements and the standards in terms of which teacher education institutions in the States are approved to recommend students for certification.

Officials of the larger institution of which professional preparation programs in education are a part will play important roles, especially in budgeting but perhaps also in other areas affecting program (e.g. enrollment, personnel, registration, placement, etc.)

The State Board of Education (or perhaps a Professional Practices Board) plays a key role in defining requirements for certification. The manner in which the administrative arm of the State Board, the State Department of Education, carries out its responsibilities will also bear on program. That interaction is not always direct, as in, for example, on-site evaluations of professional preparation programs. It may be indirect in terms of the way in which state monies are distributed to local educational agencies (e.g. are special education funds distributed on a programmatic basis or a classroom unit basis; does the foundation formula make provision for in-service funds or create expectations or incentives for in-service activities, etc.) or in the elaboration of curricular expectations which have a way of determining how school systems define their personnel needs.

The state body responsible for administering higher education in a state often plays an important role, primarily though not necessarily exclusively in

the public sector. The way in which state subsidies are distributed to the campuses of the state system can have a profound effect on program, for example, especially if the subsidy models are based on the history of program costs and therefore constrained by the past value judgments of local administrators above the level of teacher educators.

State legislatures get in the act, most significantly in terms of decisions about the structure for administering state certification procedures and in budgeting for higher and lower education. Occasionally they may even dabble in prescribing curricular areas or aims.

The Federal government plays an often surprisingly direct hand. Most dramatically, we might refer, for example, to the passage of P.L. 94-142 which mandates, as the price of continued State receipt of Federal dollars for the handicapped, the adoption of parent/professional conferences to review annual individualized program prescriptions, to say nothing of the implementation of the concept known as mainstreaming.

Students are important elements in the political structure. They may be directly involved, for example, in the governance of program by participation in representative bodies or in committee responsibilities. They may have evaluation responsibilities respecting teaching or program. They are the consumers, and, as a stakeholder group in the most primary sense, they require careful attention to see that their interests are served and protected along with those of the larger profession and its ultimate clients, children, their parents, and other learners.

Accrediting bodies at the regional and national level also can be expected to have important roles. This varies depending where one happens to be as an institution in the evaluation cycle, how much membership may cost, who's trying to change the accreditation standards, and on what basis.

The increasing phenomenon of local advisory bodies to professional education programs is another influence in the political matrix. These bodies, composed of professional and lay representatives, constitute an independent source of programmatic evaluation and input.

While the enumeration could go on further, this illustrative listing ought not to stop without mentioning the real influence and impact of the cooperating schools and districts without whom professional training programs as we now know them would be inoperable. Increasingly the conversations with cooperating schools take on the character of a careful negotiation where mutual benefits are properly insisted upon by both parties before often quite formal agreements are consummated.

The point of this elaboration of actors and stakeholders whose interests impinge upon the professional preparation of educators is only to illustrate how diverse the groups, how numerous the arenas, and, therefore, how difficult the task. Whatever professional education is, it is surely the outcome of the complex interaction of diverse actors and jurisdictions. The chief administrator in professional education must operate effectively in all these environments, understand the different structures and incentives guiding the diverse actors, attend to the need to articulate parallel strategies appropriate to each element in the larger equation, and orchestrate all the instruments to achieve desired goals. It requires fine sensitivities, a sense of when to bid and when to pass, together with a great amount of energy and a healthy capacity for enduring delay in encountering rewards.

If the external environment of the chief administrator is intensely and intrinsically political, so is the internal environment. The more one attends to the parallel, the more striking it is.

There are differences, to be sure. The chief administrator is not different

people, but rather is the same individual called upon at different times and in different places to play appropriate roles and functions. Complicating and enriching the situation, the administrator is involved in a wide variety of roles and responsibilities wholly distinct (although not necessarily apart) from the responsibilities growing out of the administrator role. The crucial question, however, is the same: which function or role gets what, when, where, and how (the classical formulation of what the study of politics is about).

Chief administrators are called upon to perform a wide variety of personal and professional roles. I present here an illustrative listing of those roles and functions according to the traditional distinction between things professional and things personal. I do this to facilitate understanding even though I am deeply concerned that the traditional and so often unyielding distinction between one's personhood (personal being) and one's role (professional being) lies at the center of our difficulties.

An important role for administrators, for example, is that of evaluator or judge. Is a program adequate? Does it meet standards? Are its outcomes justifiable? Is this person worth hiring or reappointing? Does that person warrant promotion and tenure? All of those questions are evaluative and judgmental.

All of them have the effect, however, sooner or later, of "locating" the administrator. They entail commitment to a position and the possibility of being held to account for that judgment. Consequently, they raise the prospect of creating stress and demands for time beyond that required in the actual making of the decision, time that may be consumed variously in explaining or justifying the decision to various individuals or groups or dealing with the consequences of the decision. Thus, the role of judge or evaluator raises the prospect of a squeeze on the manager as a function of possible opposition and resultant demands against the manager's time.

Another administrator role conflicts with that of judge. Managers desire (or may feel called upon) to nurture, guide, or help others in their performance and the improvement thereof. When functioning in such a posture, however, it seems important to separate oneself as sharply as one can from the evaluative role that may be called for at some future time. The requirements of a successfully nurturant posture seem effectively compromised by an overt manifestation of a possible future judgmental stance.

Administrators must, from time to time, project program, needs, resources, and staffing into the future. The responsibility for institutional projection may create conflict, psychologically or organizationally, with current program, the monitoring and care of which is also a managerial role of no small consequence. The conflict is almost certain to arise when projected program appears different from current.

Administrators perform informational and linkage functions. These functions are designed to communicate program goals and needs and also to provide opportunities to elicit reactions which can then be weighed and accorded whatever attention may seem appropriate. When everything is fine, performing the public relations functions is a delight. When it is not, however, doing it at all may be close to fraud or it may be an open invitation to conflict.

Chief administrators must be leaders and followers; they are generals and lieutenants at the same time. This can produce anxious moments to say the least. This is certainly not a new insight. It is a classic problem of middle management. What may be in the best interests of the larger institution may not be in the best interests of the component. What is in the best interests of the component, may be troublesome for the larger unit. What is important in the context of this presentation is that the two roles required of the chief administrator delimit two more stakeholders necessarily resident in the inner person of the administrator.

The administrator also has a personal being. In that capacity, the dean is child and, most likely, also spouse and parent. Almost all of us deal with the inherent differences in those three roles; the conflicts between them send administrator and administered alike to the couch, whether or not there may be some connection with the pressures and anxieties of one's professional life.

All the psychological, emotional, cognitive, and creative needs an individual may have also find expression in the variety of roles played in one's personal life. We may be athletes, caring about our physical selves and struggling for the time in which to realize that portion of our chosen being. We may be "avocators", that is, people who have identified some interests beyond the professional or familial which give us satisfaction or creative release, whether it be sailing, photography, gardening, or cabinetry, dirt biking, camping, stamp collecting, hiking or fishing. We may seek further understanding of ourselves or others, the exploration of things spiritual or temporal, or attention to broader public interests or perhaps those of a more humbly personal nature.

These roles, too, compete for attention in the chief administrator. They, too, need time and attention, consume energy and give promise of restoring commitment, purpose and meaning, yet often apparently at the expense of the resolution, more quickly or more effectively, of problems and hopes in the professional domain of our existence.

Within each of the two domains, professional and personal, roles conflict and compete. But the tensions <u>between</u> the two domains is perhaps fiercest of all. For whatever reasons--and they are many, for example, the fact that our culture virtually forces us to dichotomize work and personal life or that our professional and personal existences tend to occur in places and times which overlap each

other little--the major role conflicts which seem to occur tend to group often around the professional/personal tension. In my own existence, for example, I find that the expectations that I, the institution, and others have of me in the performance of my professional role are of such an extent and sometime of such a character that they often appear to lay threat to my most basic sense of self.

The demands are such that I find I must struggle to find even modest amounts of time to spend with the most significant other people in my life. Demands for service to others are such that attending to one's own growth and development comes across as selfishness. Desires to be nurturant and supportive conflict with the judgmental character of many of my personnel responsibilities. The litigiousness of American education at all levels appears to require a care in data collection and analysis and an attentiveness to procedure which borders on compulsiveness, both of them so time consuming as to leave precious little time for carrying out what by rights ought to be the central purposes of the organization. The instances when accountability demands are made against me in the absence of reciprocal services rendered to me which permit the demands to be met are too numerous to mention. They create a situation where large portions of my time are spent trying to persuade, force, or box people into doing for me what their jobs say they ought to be doing as a matter of course. Institutional or managerial norms which work against administrators displaying the range of feelings and emotions which help to define the human animal, further delimit our sense of identity to say nothing of allowing us an important release which helps to keep people whole.

When all of this is considered together, when the different roles and functions are examined, and all the points of potential conflict understood and appreciated, the nature of what I am calling the internal political environment begins to

come across. It will be hot, confusing, uncertain, intense, and highly problematical. The importance of clear sense of identity and basic purpose, in political terms, a constitution, seems crucial.

What do I mean by "constitution"? How can I use the term in reference to both external and internal environments as I have called them?

I use the term constitution in a quite traditional way to refer to the basic purposes which guide a political entity together with the delineation of the fundamental structures in terms of which those purposes will be sought. In that broad sense, the educational establishment (or any other major social or human service enterprise) can be said to have a constitution, but so can any individual. The constitution need not be written down; it can be the accumulation of accepted practice just as well as a formally written and adopted document.

I recognize that it may see strange at first to apply the term "constitution" to individuals. I think it becomes especially important and provocative, particularly for individuals possessing extraordinarily complex existences as a consequence of the numerous roles and functions they are expected to perform. Let me speak first to the importance of constitutions for the organizations deans are immediately responsible for administering, then to the importance of their own constitutions as individuals.

The constitution that exists for the education establishment writ large is a many faceted one. In this country, for example, a portion is to be found in the Constitution of the United States, Article X of which reserves to the states those powers not explicitly lodged in the Federal Government. Education, not assigned federally, is one of the powers reserved to the States. But beyond that, and omitting consideration of the obvious Federal interests and involvement in education (justified presumably under the general welfare clause which is also

in the Constitution), the welter of different arrangements and understandings is bewildering. True, there are accepted practices and arrangements, and at a certain level of generality a high degree of congruence in approach across the nation as a whole.

Given the large number of actors and stakeholders already referenced above, however, how can a department, school, or college of education approach matters constitutionally and why is this desirable? Obviously, no single academic entity charged with responsibility for professional education can develop or enforce for the whole education establishment a constitution in the sense I am talking about it here. What it can do, however, is devise one for itself and attempt to examine and relate to other elements in analogous terms. In other words, organizations with constitutions have standing to ask other organizations to function in similar terms according to their defined charters, or to formulate such understandings, or at least to operate in terms that are roughly equivalent.

It is to be expected that most academic organizations responsible for professional education have some kind of governance structure and that is a start. What I am suggesting here, however, is that the issue of constitution or governance will be more fully considered and appreciated to the extent that there is deeper realization that the enterprise we are engaged in is political and not merely academic.

Recall the long list of actors and stakeholders in the political enterprise called professional education. Faculty, dean, university administration, State Board of Education, State Regents, the State Department of Education, the legislature, professional associations, cooperating schools and districts, students, and others are all involved. The domains, responsibilities, roles, functions and needs of each are different, some times distinct, sometimes overlapping. What an academic organization responsible for training or re-training professionals

for their roles in education requires is an understanding of its own structure which will enable it to relate appropriately to the diversity and complexity which it encounters.

It needs, therefore, first to be clear of its own fundamental purposes. Defining institutional goals is time consuming, conflict generating, and difficult. It will always be a political enterprise, for it will involve presentation and examination of diverse values, some of which are oriented to the past, some to the present, and some to the future. Different stakeholders will want to be represented. Present program with all the interest properly vested therein will inevitably compete with conceptions of what some will feel the organization ought to be doing.

The difficulty with engaging in a basic goal defining exercise is that such an effort will almost always have to be done on top of the ongoing activities of the organization or will require a setting aside of time as an activity in its own right. Since many will perceive it as an activity of high generality and almost by definition not immediately useful, it will be viewed negatively because of its competition with the immediate press of day-to-day responsibilities which we all have difficulty meeting anyway. The payoff of such an activity, however, is that once it is done and once some degree of consensus has been arrived at as to what the basic purposes of the organization are, it then provides a backdrop which simplifies a raft of other issues and decisions which from time to time will confront the organization.

A few examples may be helpful. Let us say the organization chooses to establish as its goal the improvement of existing program. This will allow it to dispose relatively quickly of proposals which entail getting involved in new kinds of activities. At some later time, when the goals of improvement have been achieved, the basic purposes might again be addressed and perhaps altered to

deal with new realities or desires. At a somewhat different level, however, agreement about purpose may contribute measurably to day-to-day management. The organization might establish as a basic operating premise that students will have access to alternative routes to achieve program aims. Once that criteria is established, it becomes a much simpler matter to examine and hold programs to the accomplishment of that end. It is no longer simply a matter of consultative suggestion, but is now institutional policy.

Defined purpose is one element of an organization constitution. The structures, temporary or continuing, on the basis of which it carries out its responsibilities, including its governance, are equally important. A moment ago I made a distinction between political and academic enterprises. An organizational and administrative structure that is politically oriented to the education of professionals will be one which is capable of encompassing in some deliberate and accountable way the many influences which will be brought to bear. It would be a structure where the roles of the various actors within the organization are defined and interrelated, where the access points for diverse concerns to different structural elements are specified, and where the totality of concerns which may impinge upon the organization can be seen to be encompassed. Who are the actors in the College? Who are its stakeholders? How do they gain access to policy development and implementation? Whereare what kinds of policies formulated? How are they to be administered? What are the conventions applied? How can determined policies be easily accessed by those who have a need to know? All of these and more are the kinds of questions which need to be answered.

There is no one format for doing this. Different institutions and different environments and different people will produce different structures. But I would submit that the basic premise, the political character of the enterprise, needs

full recognition in whatever finally emerges.

It is time now to turn to the application of the concept of constitution to the personhood of the dean. While much of what I have just said about the importance of constitutions for organizations will seem sensible and perhaps even obvious, the use of the term in reference to individuals may seem strange. I say that because I sense an awkwardness myself, even while I am convinced that it is apposite.

A chief administrator comprehends in his or her person a wide variety of roles, many of which hold promise of potential conflict. Among these may be found such roles as child, planner, evaluator, spouse, program monitor, parent, leader, avocator, follower, figurehead, linker, and so on. All of these roles compete for time, attention, and energy. All spring from real needs and interests resident in the administrator at different times and in different places.

My proposition is that unless the administrator has at some level a sense of consciousness about purpose and structure which is parallel to that organizations also require, the administrator will sooner or later encounter serious difficulties. In the current argot, what I am talking about is a more sophisticated sense of getting one's act together.

It entails a consciousness of purpose and strategy, a sense of priority and an awareness of how to approach the continuing process of re-examining and reordering one's priorities in a manner uniquely suited to one's own idiosyncracies and the environment in which we find ourselves. It demands a tenacious willingness to periodically set aside scarce resources of time and energy to undertake that kind of searching self-examination, the courage to seek help when one needs it and to ask for it even when one <u>doesn't</u> feel the need for it, and the frame of mind to dwell a little more on the cosmic comedy

of it all than on its more tragic dimensions.

A chief administrator operating according to constitutional principles in the sense that I am talking about them here would be recognizable on the following scores. One would find, for example, the ability to answer when asked what the two or three most important guides to action are, to be able to identify a relatively small number of primary goals, and to have some notion of the lexicon of managerial strategies and tactics which personally feel most easily accessible, comfortable, and effective. Absent the above someone who would be willing to examine the question fairly intensively would also be a prime candidate.

These ideas are too new to me to go much beyond what I have set down here. I have few suggestions on how to go considering personal constitutions. I am sure there must be many ways and that the right ways for given individuals must be chosen and shaped by them.

I am considerably more sure of the importance of this conception. I think that the conception of internal political conflict between roles as a framework for understanding the behavior, performance, and success or failure of administrators may prove of considerable value. An illustration or two may be helpful. One consequence of this view is that it helps to dissolve the arbitrary distinction between the professional and personal dimensions of administrators' existence in favor of a more complex but realistic interaction of a wide variety of roles and the expectations and requirements attendant on each. That helps to dissolve one more of the rather arbitrary dichotomies in contemporary life which together, as Willi Harman has suggested, constitute problematical premises which contribute so much to the problems faced by the contemporary world.

A second illustration may be found in what it suggests about why

administrators fail or why they turn over their posts so rapidly. The failure isn't because of "pressure" per se, or because of accumulated injuries or embitterment at nonsupportive or negative decisions, and not because their energy gets used up. These, I would submit, are all symptoms of the real problem. The real problem lies in the accumulated internal stress resulting from an inadequate consideration, understanding and prioritization of diverse and sometimes contradictory roles. The behaviors which result, behaviors which finally must be owned by the manager because they did in fact get emitted, either produce problems of sufficient magnitude in the external environment to lead to removal by others, or they produce so much internal stress that the individual exits more or less voluntarily to escape that which has become psychologically untenable, whether or not that circumstance is consciously realized or not.

If my analysis of the internal environment has any measure of truth to it, then the daily reality of the chief administrator is one of a continual coping with the competition between roles. That press, as I have said, is intense, highly personalized, idiosyncratic, and hot. It begins to suggest why so many of us find the cool, highly generalized, crisply rational character of the bulk of the research on administration and management so singularly unhelpful.